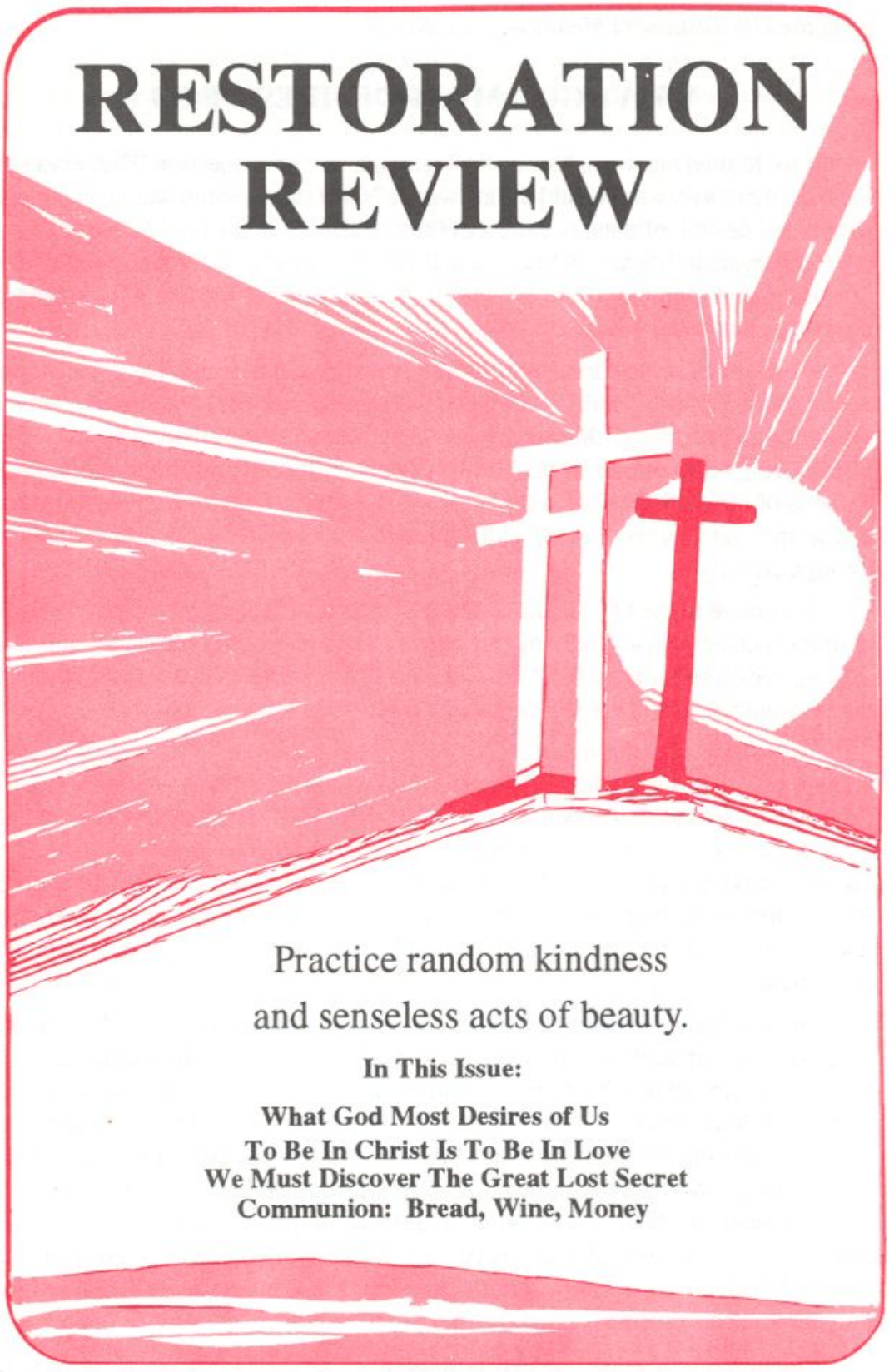
RESTORATION REVIEW



Practice random kindness
and senseless acts of beauty.

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What the Old Testament Means to Us. . . No. 16

WHAT GOD MOST DESIRES OF US

If we limited ourselves to the Old Testament with the question *What does God most desire of us?,* what would the answer be? Or if the question had to do with the nature and destiny of man, is there a definitive answer in the OT? Is "God's man" or "God's woman" clearly delineated in the OT? Is the OT "Calvinistic" in its view of humankind, depicting him as wholly depraved, or is human nature seen as basically good even if flawed?

We may not be able to weigh all these questions, not even briefly, but we can attempt to see if the OT writers struggled with the question of human nature as have the philosophers through the centuries. Is there, for instance, anything in the OT like Lord Byron's description of man as "Half dust, half deity," or Thomas Carlyle's "Man is of the earth, but his thoughts are with the stars; mean and petty his wants and desires, yet they serve a soul with thoughts which sweep the heavens and wander through eternity."

Or is there in the OT anything like Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Every man is a divinity in disguise, a god playing the fool," or Thomas Hobbes' insistence that man is by nature brutish and selfish? Then there is William James' reminder that man is the only animal that preys systematically on its own species.

Just as the sages through the ages have given mixed reviews in their study of humankind, so it is with the sT. But one thing is sure: there is no intimation in the OT that humankind descended from a monkey. Some intellectuals, oddly enough, have insisted that such is our origin, as when at an Oxford gathering the atheist Thomas Huxley and Bishop Samuel Wilberforce discussed the question. When Wilberforce suggested that Huxley may have descended from a monkey, Huxley retorted that that would be more honorable than descending from a dishonest clergyman !

One will hardly find a more exalted view of humankind than in Ps. 8 where the poet, having contemplated the starry heavens above as God's glorious handiwork, asks "What is man that You are mindful of him?" He answers his own question: "You made him a little lower than the angels. You have crowned him with glory and honor." The poet goes on to describe man as being given by God dominion over all created things. And yet the same book of Psalms and perhaps the same poet cries out in despair "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." There is at least one passage that describes the mix of good and bad in man: "Truly, this only have I found: that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes" (Ecc. 7:29).

This mixture of good and evil is sometimes strangely related, as in Gen 9:6 where man is depicted as a likely murderer of his own kind and yet described as being in the image of God: “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man.” Gen. 1:26 not only has God creating humankind “in Our image” but also “according to our likeness.” That we were created in God’s likeness is too baffling to contemplate. There can be no more exalted view of human beings than to say they are in the image of God. And yet Ps. 14:2- 3 tells how God looks down from heaven to see what man is like and finds him evil: “They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt, there is none who does good, no, not one.”

The OT thus sees man as “a little lower than the angels” and “in the image of God” and yet as “corrupt” and capable of doing nothing good. Amidst this strange mixture of good and evil man appears to have a choice. As to which of these forces dominates, good or evil, depends on the responses he makes. That he has freewill to choose the prophets are quick to point out, such as when Joshua challenged the Israelites to make the choice to serve God. The people responded, “The Lord our God we will serve, and His voice we will obey” (Josh. 24:24).

It is in our freedom to choose that we see what God most desires of us. It is simply that he wants us to choose him. In choosing God we remain a mixture of both good and evil, but we have nonetheless cast our lot with God. This is evident in the case of David who was uniquely described as “a man after God’s own heart.” David came to see in all his sinful weakness that it is “a broken and contrite heart” that God most desires. That is what made him so special with God, and that is what will make us special to him - a heart turned toward him, humble and penitent. We don’t have to turn in a perfect performance, but we do have to hunger for God above all earthly things.

The OT makes it clear what God most desires of his creatures, spelling out the kind of person he will look to, as in Is. 66:2: “But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.”

This is a sobering truth for people who live in a culture that behaves as if there were no God, which is what secularism is. God can hardly get our attention. The prophet Isaiah in the above text named what God most wants of humankind as he spoke of the glory and majesty of God, referring to heaven being God’s throne and the earth his footstool. Our society does not stand in awe of God, trembling in the face of his glory and majesty, because it gives God no thought at all.

Sin is not as much at the heart of the human predicament as indifference. The prayer that most impressed Jesus is the attitude that is most esteemed throughout the Bible, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner."—*the Editor*

A man of character will make himself worthy in any position he is given.—*Gandhi*

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We Must Discover the Great Lost Secret. . .

WHAT MUST THE CHURCH OF CHRIST DO TO BE SAVED? (16)

Let's face it, the Churches of Christ are in the doldrums. Our services are often boring, lifeless, gloomy. I'm convinced that our most loyal members attend regularly because they are just that, loyal, and not because they find it joyous and exciting. We are not growing. An outsider would never see us as imaginative, creative, or innovative. Except for some encouraging exceptions, we are not a changing people and we are not out on the cutting edge. We are going to have to get with it or we will not be saved.

That other mainline denominations are in the same predicament does not justify our own stagnation. As a well-known automobile executive says on TV: *Lead the way, follow, or get out of the way.* It is not all that different with the churches. If we don't get with it, we will not have to worry about what will happen to us. We'll be left behind.

At the heart of our problem, as well as other churches, is that we are caught in the trappings of our own institutionalism—or *churchism* might be the word. We have expensive edifices to pay for and to maintain, staffs to support, programs to fund. Our Achilles heel is the System. The System resists change, except occasional cosmetic change. Nothing real or substantial. The System demands conformity, and it is uneasy with thinking people around, especially a thinking preacher or a preacher that says something.

The System must maintain the status quo, and it must preserve itself at all cost. This is why it seeks to keep everyone satisfied by reacting rather than acting. And most significantly, the System is tied to the building. Regular church attendance, along with generous giving, is the essence of "faithfulness."

This brings me to the one thing above most everything else that we must do to be saved. We must recover—or is it *discover?*—the great lost secret of primitive Christianity. That secret was the dynamic of joyous, Spirit-filled gatherings in homes. Primitive Christianity knew nothing of buildings that never seem to get paid for. They did not have to bother with building an educational wing or getting the parking lot resurfaced, which are major tasks for the modem church. The early churches were house churches; as they grew they took in more homes. It wasn't until the third or fourth centuries that they had edifices and eventually "sanctuaries." This is the great secret of the early church that we are indifferent to—they were house churches while we are cathedral churches. They had a Holy Spirit-complex while we have an edifice-complex.

The edifice-complex has pews lined up one behind the other where we look behind each other's cars and may not even know the people who sit on the same pew—and may not even speak to them, week after week. The Holy Spirit-complex expressed itself in the home with sisters and brothers gathered in a circle, sharing their stories from out there in the world, drinking and eating together, rejoicing together. They were usually a persecuted people who took refuge in each other in the family circle, which was truly the Body of Christ.

Acts 2:46 tells us about them: "And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts." There are four references to "the church in thy house" and at least 20 instances in Acts and the letters where Christians met in homes. They were in the temple grounds, in synagogues, in the streets, in homes, but they never "went to church" in a building set apart for that purpose, not for at least 200 years. This does not mean that it is wrong for us to have buildings, but we need to realize what we have allowed the System to do to us.

In home gatherings they knew each other and grew close to one another. Everyone could take part. They didn't have to worry about a woman "getting in the pulpit" since there was no pulpit. They shared together, with each part functioning unto the edifying of the Body. They did not look to an employed functionary to deliver sermons; there were no sermons. They didn't have to worry about how to dress; if one came in smelling offish it was OK. If a congregation needed to expand, it took in another home; if it needed to be dissolved, no problem since it had no mortgage to payoff. In the home they were "members one of another," rejoicing in the Spirit. The great lost secret of the primitive church is that they were empowered with the Holy Spirit in home gatherings.

I do not conclude from all this that we should close down our buildings. We cannot be the first century church, but as the 20th century church we can discover the great lost secret of the primitive church and make it applicable to our own time. Our buildings can

be used for small group gatherings as well as large congregational meetings, but they should be more intimate and open to the leading of the Spirit than the usual Sunday school arrangement. Let eight to ten men and women gather in a circle each Sunday and Wednesday evenings long enough to get intimately acquainted. They could start by sharing what Jesus means to them, and from there they could talk about their fears, hopes, problems, family, etc. They would learn to pray together as a family of sisters and brothers, and they would eventually unburden their souls to each other.

Along with this we could get away from our buildings and into homes more than we now do. A congregation could take a Sunday evening each month to meet in homes, with something like ten to twelve people to each home. We need to be in each other's home, come to know each other better, love each other more, learn to pray and share together in a way that cannot be done in the big "sanctuary" at church. In such an atmosphere the Holy Spirit can teach us more about the meaning of unity and fellowship.

The same circle could continue meeting on a long term basis, but in time the circles could rotate so that a greater number in the church would know each other more personally. It is when we can share our long-kept secrets with each other, along with our hangups, that we really become "members one of another" where when one suffers all suffer and when one rejoices all rejoice. This is Body life and this is the great lost secret of the primitive church.

These small groups are also ideal for friendship evangelism. Outsiders can often be introduced to spiritual things in the informal atmosphere of a private home rather than in a church setting. The joy and spontaneity of the home gatherings can also transfer to some degree to the public assemblies if only we will be less rigid. When our services are reved up and there is "a sweet spirit that fills this place" we will be more inclined to share it with others. Who wants to invite a friend to a boring service?

To discover the lost secret we must be more open to change. We must get beyond the institutional church to Christ himself. We must become vulnerable to each other as sisters and brothers, fervent in the Spirit, serving the Lord.

To do this we do not need to think *big* in the sense of huge congregations and mega-churches. The lost secret is not big programs, large crowds or huge budgets, just as it is not necessarily big government and big business that makes a nation truly great. We may rightfully become disillusioned with "big" things. Our hopes might better lie with quiet processes and small circles where transforming events may take place.—*the Editor*

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A New Motto. . .

TO BE IN CHRIST IS TO BE IN LOVE

I suggest a new motto for the heirs of the Stone-Campbell Movement. We are a people with a penchant for slogans, especially in our earlier days when sayings like "We are Christians only" and "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things love" were current. Our pioneers liked such sayings because they served as capsules for great principles. It might have been an exercise in futility to denigrate creeds as sinful and divisive, but to say "Christ our only creed" said it positively and effectively.

Some slogans we never quite understood, however potent they were, such as, "We are free to differ but not to divide." We turned that one on its head, behaving in exactly the opposite way! There was another motto that backfired on us: "Where the Scriptures speak we speak, where the Scriptures are silent we are silent," for it was used to divide rather than to heal. And there was at least one that proved too lofty for us: Barton Stone's "Let Christian unity be our polar star."

The slogan I suggest for this generation gets at our basic need, for it is only love that "binds everything together in perfect unity" (Col. 3:14). Love is the only balm that will heal our ugly and scandalous divisions. It is only love that covers a multitude of sins, and, according to both Jesus and Paul, it is only love that is the essence of all the commandments. So I submit the motto for your consideration:

To be in Christ is to be in love.

I thought it appropriate to introduce this slogan not at a Church of Christ but at an ecumenical gathering. A Christian women's circle here in Denton, made up of believers of many denominations, invited the pastors of several local churches to one of their luncheons. I was invited because Ouida was involved. Before the program got underway I moved quietly from one minister to the next, suggesting my motto as a workable principle for the unity of all our people. On each sincere heart I laid out the principle couched in capsule form, an epigram the English teachers would call it, "To be in Christ is to be in love." "How about it?," I asked each one.

The responses were all positive, even enthusiastic. They agreed that if we are indeed "in Christ," if we are truly Christians, we will love each other. And if we love each other we will accept each other, warts and all. We agreed that the converse is not necessarily true, for one might be in love who is not in Christ, but if one is in Christ he will be in love with his sisters and brothers, and with the whole, wide world for that matter, as Christ was, who died for the sins of the whole world. They also agreed that if we are in Christ we will not hate one another or be rude to one another.

But hate may not be the antonym of love. It may rather be indifference. If I do not love it does not follow that I hate, but it does follow that I am indifferent. We would all be repulsed by such an affirmation as "To be in Christ is to be indifferent." And yet that is where many Christians are in their relation to each other, *indifferent.*

If the Bible makes anything clear it is that love is a matter of will, not just emotion. Love is doing, reaching out. Love is patient and kind. It feeds, gives drink, clothes, visits. It rejoices, hopes, believes, endures, forgives. What Rufus Jones says about truth could be said of love: "To discover a truth involves the apostolic task of going out and doing it." Yes, we learn love by doing it! While love is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, which is its source, it is just that, *fruit.* It is not simply within, for it is outwardly evident.

To be in Christ is to be in love. It is a slogan-principle that we can hold to without surrendering any truth or approving of any error. We can love a sister even when she's wrong; we can accept a brother in spite of his errors. In loving and accepting others we do so without endorsing all that they believe or all that they do. We love them because we are in Christ who teaches us, "Love one another even as I have loved you." So the motto could be extended to say, *and it is love that unites us.*

Let's ring out the motto! It is an appropriate entree for conversation. Ask others what they think about it. If we practiced it would it heal our indifference toward each other? Is it a principle for unity? Does it capture the great biblical truth that it is love, only love, that is the golden cord that binds us all together?

Love cannot be forced, love cannot be coaxed and teased. It comes out of Heaven, unasked and unsought. (Pearl S. Buck)

If there is anything better than to be loved, it is loving. (Anonymous)

—the Editor

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MARCHING FOR JESUS

It was a unique experience walking down Commerce St. in downtown Dallas with 15,000 other people. Even though we had a "Parade" permit from the city, this was no ordinary parade. The city is used to nationally-televised Cotton Bowl parades and to the brawling Texas-Oklahoma football fans who take over down-town Dallas for a weekend every year, but there was nothing like this before. The thousands of men, women, and children (many in strollers) were marching for Jesus. They were singing songs like "Open

the Gates For the King of kings," "Heaven Is In My Heart," and "Say Yes." They carried banners depicting Jesus as Lord of lords and King of kings, as Lord of the city, and as Sovereign over all the earth. They clapped, prayed, praised, and smiled as they joyously wound their way through much of downtown Dallas.

I made it a point to study the spectators, even though the march was not for spectators or for the media. It was for Jesus. No "causes" were promoted, such as anti-pornography or pro-life. Since it was Saturday there were not all that many spectators, but it was interesting to see the reaction of those that did line the streets. One man watched with seeming disbelief and his face seemed to read "What the hell is going on?" The woman standing beside him was blotting the tears from her eyes, her face reflecting a different reaction. I figured there was a story there.

As we passed the Adolphus Hotel a black porter paused to watch for a moment, and vigorously applauded before he hurried on. I noticed that when we passed fashionable Nieman-Marcus people had stopped their shopping and were watching from the richly appointed windows. People in cars at intersections who had to wait did not seem to mind. Some got out of their cars. Police appeared pleased with their easy task. I did not see even one person smoking, and of course no beer cans and hardly any littering.

As we passed near Dealy Plaza, the Kennedy assassination sight where there are always tourists, I looked up once more to the infamous window on the sixth floor of the book depository building where those fatal shots were fired almost three decades ago. My thoughts were: That was Dallas when a President was murdered in its streets, but this too is Dallas when thousands are marching for Jesus in its streets.

Most significant is that while we were marching for Jesus in Dallas over a million others were marching in 125 American cities and in 25 other nations, including countries of the former Soviet Union. In every march the intention is to exalt Jesus Christ, and joy is its primary expression. The marches are a grassroots movement of people who want to express publicly their love for Jesus Christ. The *marches are for* Jesus, not for any cause, not as any protest—no T-shirts or placards pointing to anything but Jesus, not even a church.

The marches are intended to be an expression of our own repentance and a call for a new sense of compassion and humility . We confess the sins of our cities around the world as our own. It is a call to respond to 2 Chron. 7:14, "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

A van-load of young people from our congregation in Denton took part in the march. They felt that they had done something real for Jesus. Marching with thousands of others, singing and praising, in the streets of Dallas was really something else!

Not the least, it also draws Christians together, Jesus himself being the bond of union. There was lots of friendly conversation, but it was about Jesus, not some denomination. In such an atmosphere people couldn't care less about this or that denomination. It is a glorious way to demonstrate that there is room for differences in the Body of Christ.

Another world-wide march is scheduled for June 12,1993 that will proclaim that "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and all the people therein" (Ps. 24:1). Then on June 25,1994 there will be "A Day To Change The World" when the marches will circle the globe and include every capital city in every nation on earth. It will proclaim that Jesus Christ is the answer to such evils as war, injustice, and racism.

We can believe that this is one more way that God will use to answer the prayer of our Lord for the unity of all Christians. Instead of sitting and arguing we can march and praise God together!—*the Editor*

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A NEW STATEMENT ON UNITY

(Recently at its' Seventh Assembly the World Council of Churches issued a new statement on "The Unity of the Church as Koinonia: Gift and Calling." It is worthy of our studied consideration. The comment that follows is my own.—*Editor*)

The purpose of God according to Holy Scripture is to gather the whole of creation under the Lordship of Christ Jesus in whom, by the power of the Holy Spirit, all are brought into communion with God (Ephesians 1).

The church is the foretaste of this communion with God and with one another. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit enable the one church to live as a sign of the reign of God and servant of the reconciliation with God, promised and provided for the whole creation.

The purpose of the church is to unite people with Christ in the power of the Spirit, to manifest communion in prayer and action and thus to point to the fullness of communion with God, humanity and the whole creation in the glory of the kingdom.

The calling of the church is to proclaim reconciliation and to provide healing, to overcome divisions bases on race, gender, age, culture, colour and to bring all people in communion with God.

Because of sin and the misunderstanding of the diverse gifts of the Spirit, the churches are painfully divided within themselves and among each other. Their scandalous divisions damage the credibility of their witness to the world in worship and service. Moreover they contradict not only the church's witness to the world in worship and service. Moreover, they contradict not only the church's witness but also its very nature.

We acknowledge with gratitude to God that in the ecumenical movement the churches walk together in mutual understanding, theological convergences, common suffering and common prayer, share witness and service, and they draw close to one another.

This has allowed them to recognize a certain degree of communion already existing between them. This is indeed the fruit of the active presence of the Holy Spirit in the midst of all who believe in Christ Jesus and who struggle for visible unity now.

Nevertheless, churches have failed to draw the consequences for their life from the degree of communion they have already experienced and the agreements already achieved. They have remained satisfied to co-exist in division.

The unity of the church to which we are called is Koinonia, given and expressed in:

—the common confession of the apostolic faith;

—a common sacramental life entered by the one baptism and celebrated together in one eucharistic fellowship;

—a common life in which members and ministries are mutually recognized and reconciled;

—a common mission witnessing to all people to the gospel of God's grace and serving the whole of creation.

The goal of the search for full communion is realized when all the churches are able to recognize in one another the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church in its fulness.

This full communion will be expressed on the local and the universal levels through conciliar forms of life and action. In such communion churches are bound in all aspects of their life together at all levels in confessing the one faith and engaging in worship and witness, deliberation and action.

Diversities which are rooted in theological traditions, various cultural, ethnic or historical contexts are integral to the nature of communion; yet there are limits to diversity.

Diversity is illegitimate when, for instance, it makes impossible the common confession of Jesus Christ as God and Saviour the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8); salvation and the final destiny of humanity as proclaimed in Holy Scripture and preached by the apostolic community.

In communion diversities are brought together in harmony as gifts of the Holy Spirit, contributing to the richness and fullness of the church of God.

Many things have been done and many remain to be done on the way toward the realization of full communion.

Churches have reached agreements in bilateral and multilateral dialogues which are already bearing fruit, reviewing their liturgical and spiritual life and their theology. In taking specific steps together the churches express and encourage the enrichment and renewal of Christian life, as they learn from one another, work together for justice and peace and care together for God's creation. The challenge at this moment in the ecumenical movement as a reconciling and renewing movement toward full visible unity for the Seventh Assembly of the WCC to call the churches:

—to recognize each other's baptism on the basis of the WCC's study of this subject;

—to move towards the recognition of the apostolic faith as expressed through the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed in the life and witness of one another;

—on the basis of convergence in faith in baptism, eucharist and ministry to consider, wherever appropriate, forms of eucharistic hospitality; we gladly acknowledge that some who do not observe these rites share in the spiritual experience of life in Christ;

—to move towards a mutual recognition of ministries;

—to endeavor in word and deed to give common witness to the gospel as a whole;

—to recommit themselves to work for justice, peace and the integrity of creation, linking more closely the search for sacramental communion of the church with the struggles for justice and peace;

—to help parishes and communities express in appropriate ways locally the degree of communion that already exists.

The Holy Spirit as the promoter of *koinonia* (2 Cor. 13:13) gives to those who are still divided the thirst and hunger for full communion. We remain restless until we grow together according to the wish and prayer of Christ that those who believe in him may be one. (Jn. 17:21)

In the process of praying, working and struggling for unity, the Holy Spirit comforts us in pain, disturbs us when we are satisfied to remain in our division, leads us to repentance and grants us joy when our communion flourishes.

Comment

While we in Churches of Christ have been generally critical of the World Council, perhaps with some justification, we should applaud this new statement on unity, not because we will agree with everything in it but because it is a bold step in the right direction. The WCC is attempting to do in our time what the pioneers of the Stone-Campbell Movement had in mind when they launched their effort—"to unite the Christians in all the sects." Since unity is supposed to be our business, we should respond enthusiastically to this statement by the WCC.

Some points made in this new document are especially impressive and are reflective of what Barton Stone and Alexander Campbell said 150 years ago and what we ourselves are supposed to believe. One of these is the recognition that while "unity in diversity" is the only unity possible, diversity has its limits, such as when it is impossible to confess Jesus as Lord and Savior. Campbell was saying this when he pointed to "the seven facts" of Eph. 4 as the basis for fellowship and unity.

The document stresses several salient truths, such as the purpose of God being to unite all creation under the Lordship of Christ, and that a united church on earth is a foretaste of what will one day be a reality in heaven. That unity is the gift of the Holy Spirit, not our work, is another important truth set forth, and that the Spirit calls us to a common mission, witnessing to all people the gospel of God's grace. It recognizes that we all have far more in common that we have differences.

The practical aspects of unity are wisely spelled out, such as recognizing each other's baptism and ministries, and our common task of supporting justice and peace in the world.

It is a humble statement in that it realizes that unity is an ongoing struggle, and that all who long for the unity for which our Lord prayed will remain restless until that prayer is answered.—*the Editor*

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COMMUNION: BREAD, WINE, MONEY

Cecil Hook

For a half century I joined others in pleading for a separation of the collection from "The Communion." Most of us have taken the collection baskets off the table and some churches pass them at another point in the service.

Now in my senility I wonder if collection trays are out of place on the table and if a separation is needed.

Such words as *commune, communion, fellowship, sharing in common, participation,* and *partnership* derive from the same root in the Greek. In our traditional usage we have made them too diverse in meaning. For instance, we do not usually think that *participate* and *commune* mean the same thing. All the italicized words in this essay, however, are interchangeable with their other noun and verb forms.

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a *participation* in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a *participation* in the body of Christ? (1 Cor. 10:16 RSV). This ritual of participation is generally thought of as "The Communion." Sharing in the one body is depicted by eating the bread; sharing the atonement is depicted by drinking the cup.

We are called upon to eat the bread and drink the cup in remembrance of Jesus as a mutual reminder. But there is another communion which we are called upon to remember. It is "taking part in the relief of the saints" (2 Cor. 8:4). The apostles in Jerusalem gave Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship (communion), not demanding that they teach circumcision, but "only they would have us to remember the poor" (Gal. 2:9f). In remembering the poor, we are urged to "Contribute to the needs of the saints" (Rom. 12:13).

In remembering the poor by giving them aid is to share their poverty. It is a fellowship in, a *participation in*, their destitution. The poor also includes persons who impoverish themselves in evangelistic activity like Paul did. Paul lovingly reminded the Philippians that "in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving except you only" (Philip. 4:14-16). He also urges, "Let him who is taught in the word share all good things with him who teaches" (Gal. 6:6). Such special collections are now mostly supplanted by regular giving to support our own self-serving local programs. Noting our shameful neglect of the poor and evangelism. it is no wonder that we would want to obscure this ritual of giving.

We remember our *fellowship* with all others in the one body when we eat the bread. We remember our *fellowship* with all the saved ones when we drink the cup. We remember our *fellowship* with the poor when we give aid. Just as the eating and drinking are in remembrance honoring Jesus, so is the giving, for "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one

of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt. 25:40). Giving to human need is a *communion with,* a *sharing with* Christ.

Giving was not a part of the supper instituted by Jesus nor were regular collections called for in the Scriptures. Neither are limited to certain days and formal assemblies. Giving is not "The Communion" as we have come to make distinctions.

Rather than the often heard announcement, "We have completed our *communion* service and will now take a collection," would it not be better to hear something like, "We have communed with bread and fruit of the vine in memory of Jesus, and now we will commune with Him in another manner by communing with the poor through money we give"?*—1350 Huisache, New Braunfels, Tx 78130*

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FREEDOM, BUT WITHIN LIMITS

Alex V. Wilson

Suppose you want to travel quickly from Louisville, where I live, to San Diego. You might go by plane. If so, during the flight the pilot might veer 25 to 50 miles off course due to a storm, navigational error; or because he wanted to see the Grand Canyon! The pilot has great freedom.

You might travel by train instead, and by train there is hardly any freedom to maneuver. After all, it is supposed to stay on the tracks, and it is disastrous if it swerves just a few feet away from them.

Or maybe you choose to go by car. Then you'll have more freedom than the train has but less than the plane. You'll have freedom, but within limits. You'll want to stay on the road, and stay within the speed limit; yet you may drive faster or slower, take a scenic route or else the most direct one, etc.

Now compare those options to the New Testament's teaching about church practices. It is not like the plane flight: "It doesn't matter what the Bible says; anything goes." But it is not like a trip by train either: "All churches should be exactly alike; all should imitate every New Testament practice—nothing more, nothing less." No, it's like traveling by car: *freedom, but within limits.*

In other words, Bible teaching about church activities is not laid down in rigid laws but in flexible principles. It tells us to baptize, but does not say if it is to be done in rivers, pools, or in a building. Christ told us to remember His death by means of the Lord's

Supper, but He didn't specify Sunday as the only day it should ever be held. After all, He initiated it on a weeknight. The Corinthian disciples had fellowship meals, but it seems Paul abolished them due to their abuses; so should we today have such meals, or not? (1 Cor. 11:17-34)

One difference between the Old and New Covenants is that the former contains many specific details while the latter contains general principles. If Christ's New Covenant with the church were as detailed as the Old Covenant with Israel, it would spell out for us exactly what the preacher would wear and a precise code governing meetings. There would be rigid regulations regarding the architecture, dimensions, and floor-plan of our buildings, if it specified them at all.

The former Covenant was suited to one people living in one small land, and during their spiritual childhood when they needed to be regimented. But the New Covenant is suited to many peoples scattered around the world in many lands with differing customs, living at different times, and being more mature they can be trusted with more freedom.

Jesus as our Rabbi has not given His church unbending rules but spiritual principles to serve as guidelines, such as "Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God," "I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved," and "Let all things be done for edifying, for the strengthening of the church."

Others principles are: "Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way," "Make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification," and "Don't pass judgment on one another; instead make up your mind not to put any stumbling block in your brother's way."

Within these and other similar guidelines found in Scripture there is much leeway and room for variety. We have great freedom, within the limits of Biblical principles and under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Thus churches need not all be alike; there is no one detailed blueprint for us all. If this be so, then congregational differences within God's guidelines should be no grounds for bitterness or lack of fellowship.

If we are to enjoy the unity which Christ desires His people to have, we must grant each other liberty in beliefs and practices. Thank the Lord we go by car, not plane or train. We do, of course, make sure we stay on the road!—*2518 Portland Ave., Louisville, Ky. 40206*

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AN OPEN LETTER

Lorna Barth

To the Preachers and Male teachers of the Churches of Christ:

Dear Sirs: It is with all honor and respect that I write this open letter concerning an important, current issue in the Churches of Christ. I have been a member of the Church of Christ for 30 years and active as a teacher, wife, mother, daughter, and sister. The issue I address is the use of sexist language and language reflected from the pulpit and from classes. I hope you will patiently hear me out, for this is vitally important to the women and young girls in your congregations.

The offenses may seem small but they are constant and widespread. As an example, in one Sunday morning adult class when we had just finished an excellent lesson on faith, the male teacher started telling "funny" jokes. One went this way: "Course women outlive men. We men work all our lives supporting them, no wonder they live longer!" This was followed by nods and Ha, Ha's. I realize this may be deemed a small matter, but like water torture where the drops keep adding up these putdowns begin to hurt after awhile.

There are several reasons why statements of this nature are harmful in both the assembly and in classes. One, since such jokes would not be tolerated if they were directed against some race or color, they are for the same reason hurtful when directed against women. Second, since women are not allowed to speak in church these sarcasms and jokes are particularly unfair, for we have no way of responding to the subtle abuse. We are expected to sit there in silence and politely smile. This distracts from the purpose of the worship assembly.

If your sermon requires you to poke fun at women as a form of humor, I suggest you revise your sermon or find some other source of humor. It is not cute and it is not funny and it is not necessary. When a woman is made uncomfortable by such abuse as this, she should respectfully leave the assembly or the class and find a quiet place elsewhere in the building where she can quietly meditate upon the word of God in peace. Otherwise the woman has to remain silent in a setting where she feels put down and is not edified.

Are not the words of this male apostle appropriate to the issue I raise? "Grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life. . . To sum up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kind-hearted, and humble in spirit." (l Peter 3:7-8)

(I would like to hear from other Christians, men and women alike, on this issue. My address is Box 105, Duvall, Wa. 98019.)

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

This will be the first summer in ten years that Ouida will be free to travel. so we plan a few trips together. including one in August to the World Convention of Churches of Christ in Long Beach. We encourage all who can to meet us there. You can register for the Convention by writing to the WCCC, 100 N. Central Expwy, Suite 804, Dallas, Tx. 75080, or you can call 214-480-0118. You will enjoy a great fellowship with our folk from allover the world. Ouida will join me also as I speak for several congregations within driving distance in our area. But for the most part we will be home during the summer since I have the task of revising my history book on the Stone-Campbell Movement. Ouida says she likes it that way since she enjoys being home, especially now that the redecoration is complete. That will give us an opportunity to visit with you if you happen to be coming our way.

Ouida wants me to remind you that there will be no issue of this journal for July and August as usual, so we will not be calling again until the September number and then for only the rest of the year. We cease publication with the December issue. This paper has become a habit that will be hard to break. Now and again I tell Ouida that it is gracious of her to keep on living with an old man like me, and she replies that it is appropriate for an old lady to live with an old man, though she isn't all that old. But recently when I said something about advancing years and how God in his mercy makes life in this world less attractive to us as we grow old, she turned up these lines from Emerson that become increasingly impressive to us:

Hope writes the poetry of the boy, but memory that of the man.
Man looks forward with smiles but backward with sighs.
Such is the providence of God.
The cup of life is sweetness at the brim—the flavor is impaired
as we drink deeper. and the dregs are made bitter that we may

not struggle when it is taken from our lips.

In a recent issue of the Blooming (Illinois) Post-Amerikan our co-worker Cecil Hook was written up favorably by Steve LaPrade under the title "Fundamentalist Rebel," though Cecil is not really a fundamentalist. It says that through his several books he is challenging the Church of Christ to start practicing Christianity. I doubt if Cecil would put it that way, but all of us who read Cecil would agree with the writeup when it says that Cecil seeks to

persuade the Church of Christ members to fully examine what it means to be a Christian. The article noted that some of Cecil's books are in their fourth printing. If you are interested in his books write to him at 1350 Huisache, New Braunfels. Tx. 78130.

The News Network International releases bulletins that show that there is still "the suffering church" around the world, even in this post-Communist age. Christians have been imprisoned and killed in Pakistan under Islamic law. While Columbia is reviewing its constitution that links the state to the Roman church, that church still has special privileges that make it difficult for Protestants. Riot squads in Peru have killed many Christian leaders. Conditions are desperate for the small underground Christian movements in Saudi Arabia made up of both guest workers and Saudi nationals who have been converted to the faith. Some who were found out were beaten up and arrested by the religious police and their whereabout is unknown. Several African countries, including Nigeria, Sudan, and Mauritania (which has only 10-15 known believers) persecute Christians; Muslims are seeking to set up Islamic laws that will illegalize the Christian faith. In northern India militant Hindus make life difficult for Christians , In Malaysia the rights of churches are progressively limited, While China reluctantly eases some restrictions against churches, Christians continue to be persecuted in some provinces, In several countries of the former Soviet Union the Orthodox Church, which was itself longtime persecuted by the Communists, now wants to reestablish its authority in those states and wants laws even more severe against non-Orthodox churches,

While World Vision and other agencies moved in to supply physical needs of the victims of the Los Angeles riots, the International Bible Society provided 30,000 Scripture booklets through a network of Black and Hispanic churches.

The Burke Road Church of Christ in Houston has a semi-annual dedication of infants, still a very rare practice among Churches of Christ. This consists of a ceremony in which parents and congregation commit themselves to the Christian nurture of the children, The church is called on to live lives of love, faith, and service as an example for the children. Along with prayer for the infants the elders lay their hands upon them, The church reports that for some years now this dedication ceremony has been a meaningful and blessed occasion for the church. Shouldn't such experiences help us to understand why other churches have been doing this for hundreds of years and call it infant baptism. Do a few drops of water make all that much difference to such a ceremony?

A recent bulletin of the Kanawha City Church of Christ in Charleston, W. V. has a quotation from one of its ministers, Steve Fox, that reflects the kind of change in thinking that many among us have longed hoped for and worked for: "My concept of Christian unity has changed drastically in the 21 years since I graduated from college, Without going

into great detail, my focus has changed from an ‘exact conformity’ pattern to a ‘unity in diversity’ approach, Sometimes I’m amazed at (and ashamed of) some things I believed and taught in the past. I pray that means I’m growing in my knowledge of Biblical unity,” It is an encouraging sign when our preachers can tell our people what they are ashamed of and how they have changed their minds, There are many that think this way who are not yet ready to say so.

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READER'S EXCHANGE

Some months ago you wrote, “Since leaving Churches of Christ, Don Finto has moved up higher, having now proclaimed himself an apostle,” I too was horrified when I first heard about that. But I discussed it with Don himself one time, and on the basis of his definition of apostleship, it is not nearly so off base as you might think, It’s very close to what Alexander Campbell believed about the office of evangelist. I know you always try to represent accurately the views of those with whom you disagree. —*Alex Wilson, Work and Work, 2518 Portland Ave” Louisville, Ky, 40206*

(I quote from Editor Alex Wilson once more because it gives me opportunity to give his correct address. In our last issue, while recommending *Word and Work* as a paper you might want to take a look at, I gave the wrong address, Alex will send you a sample copy for the asking, As for Don Finto calling himself an apostle, it shows the risk one takes when he uses a term in a way different from the way it is generally understood, If one only means he is an apostle in the sense of being “one sent” by the church, he should make that clear, As for Alexander Campbell, he clearly distinguished between an apostle and an evangelist, and, oddly enough, considered himself neither, not in the biblical sense. He was not an apostle because Christ did not call him to that office; he was not an evangelist because he did not do the work of an evangelist.—*Ed*.)

I appreciated your article “The motto that got us in trouble,” I heard someone say of Thomas Campbell’s motto, “Where the Scriptures speak we speak and where the Scriptures are silent we are silent,” ought to be turned around to say, “Where the Scriptures speak we are silent, where the Scriptures are silent we may speak,” We are free to share our views on Scriptural inferences and what a Biblical writer might have said, and we should grant that liberty to others. But if the Scriptures speak, let’s allow it to speak. We

don't have to defend it; it defends itself, We must of course proclaim it, but we're not in the business of proving it.—*Palma Bennett, Westshore Christian Church, Tampa, Florida*

With much regret I write this check for my renewal because there will be no more *Restoration Review* after December. I have enjoyed immensely your stimulating, inspirational articles and will be terribly sorry to see them end, I hope you and Ouida have many years together of a much deserved retirement.—*Mildred Carter, Brentwood, Tn.*

The joy and encouragement that *Restoration Review* has brought to my life is truly priceless. Though I have been a full time preacher for only 20 months, I have great zeal for the Lord and His Word, I am also committed to the Restoration Movement, but only to the extent that it does not come into conflict with the Scriptures, for there I take my stand.—*Bill Snide, Newport, Vt.*

We love getting *Restoration Review.* It has meant so much to us over the years. We will sadly miss it when it stops, but we know you need a breather. We know, Ouida, that you and Leroy miss your mother and that you rejoice for her in her homegoing.—*T.D. and Peggy Smith, Liberty Hill, Tx.*

I have been using Woodruff's book, "The Church In Transition," in my class, I have given it straight and have talked about using our sisters in public worship, accepting our Christian Church brethren, and seeing the Church of Christ as a denomination, I gave the class copies of your article on what the Church of Christ must do to be saved, To my surprise there has not been a negative remark. Several said that they had believed that way for a long time, I find that many members are way out in front of the leaders on these issues.—*Numa Crowder, Macomb, Illinois*

The evil days of old age are upon me. I have had two severe strokes and am still recovering from the last one. Because of physical and financial conditions, I have had to stop going here and there for the Lord, being confined mostly to my chair and getting around with a walker. Nevertheless, I am glad to yet be alive. I am 76 years old and near the time when all the pain and sickness and inabilities will have come to an end and hopefully I will go and be with Him who has watched over me, Praise the Lord!—*Paul Ketcherside, Nowata, Oklahoma* (Carl Ketcherside's brother.)

My Brother, my friend, thank you for all the years of your thought provoking articles. It is you, I believe, who are our Theseus, along with Carl Ketcherside, all under the tutelage of God's Holy Spirit. Paula and I thank you and Ouida from hearts full of gratitude to God.—*Mark Berrier, Dallas, Texas*

There is no greater goal in life than to become more like Christ. You have brought us closer in our spiritual walk with Him and we are forever thankful.—*Kevin LaStrapes, Grants Pass, Oregon*

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BOOK NOTES

Elizabeth Achtemeier is both a theological professor (Union Seminary in Virginia) and a preacher. She says the people in the pew are interested especially in two issues, their work and their home life. She charges that both of these are neglected in the pulpit. You do not have to be a preacher, though it might help, to appreciate her *Preaching About Family Relations* in which she tells what ought to be said about marriage, sex, divorce, the elderly, male and female roles, children. $10.50 postpaid.

In his *Faith Healing: Fact or Fiction?* Waymon Miller tells you whether miracles really happen in healing revivals, and he lays out the embarrassing fact of multitudes of failures, along with dealing with the psychology of faith healing. A readable and responsible work. $11.50 postpaid.

Re-Baptism by Jimmy Allen weighs the question of what and how much one must know at the time of his baptism. It deals in a general way with the rebaptism issue as it has affected Churches of Christ. He takes the view that one only needs to be a believer at the time of his baptism. $9.95 postpaid.

Edward Fudge's *The Fire That Consumes* continues to attract attention by its persuasive argument that the wicked dead are not endlessly tormented as orthodoxy has claimed, but are destroyed, which is what the Bible has said all along. We can send you a copy for $21.50 postpaid.

Back issues of this journal are available at 14 copies, selected at random by us, for only $5.00 postpaid. If you specify the issues, 50 cents each plus postage. You may purchase the bound volume of this journal for 1989-90, titled *The Hope of the Believer* for $15.00 postpaid. All seven of our bound volumes are still available, adding up to 12 years and 2400 pages. They are available at the special price of $70.00 postpaid. Our present two-year cycle, ending at the close of this year, will be bound under the title *What the Old Testament Means to Us.* If you are interested you should reserve a copy.

A new book on *Walter Scott: American Frontier Evangelist* by William Gerrard is a welcomed addition to Restoration studies. It is a well-researched, well-written study. $10.95 postpaid. For the same price we can send you another pioneer biography, *Raccoon John Smith,* delightfully written by Louis Cochran.

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